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Kennedy Press Plan Is Surprise to Editors

By the Associated Press

The White House says President Kennedy has proposed that newspapers select a representative to advise them on using information which might affect national security. But a number of prominent editors say they heard no such specific proposal.

Mr. Kennedy's news secretary, Pierre Salinger, said yesterday the President suggested at a meeting with a group of editors May 9 that the press "might want to appoint someone in whom it would have confidence to check with in case questions involving national security come up."

Mr. Salinger's remarks were made when he was asked about a story in the Boston Globe. The Globe story said Mr. Kennedy had suggested that newspapers appoint someone from their ranks as an adviser on publication of information which might affect security. The adviser would be briefed by the Government on all matters of national security.

No Specific Proposal

Benjamin M. McKelway, editor of The Star and president of the Associated Press, said in a statement that Mr. Kennedy made no specific proposals at the May 9 meeting, attended by Mr. McKelway and other editors.

Mr. McKelway's statement said:

"If the President made any such proposal as that outlined by Mr. Salinger, he did not make it to the committee of newspapermen who called on him May 9 at the White House.

"As I recall it, the President made some casual references to the idea of establishing an authority of some sort empowered to answer queries from newspapers as to whether information they planned to print would violate security.

"He did not propose, however, to establish any such machinery and the newspapermen offered no comment on the idea. Had the President advanced such a proposal, it is my impression some member of the newspaper committee would have suggested that experience in World War II demonstrated that no form of voluntary censorship would be effective without censorship of outgoing mail and newspapers in the United States."

No Further Comment

In New York, Mark Ferree, vice president of Scripps-Howard newspapers and president of the American Newspaper Publishers Association, said he had no comment beyond a statement the newspaper representatives issued after their meeting with Mr. Kennedy.

That statement was signed by Mr. Ferree and by Felix R. McKnight, executive editor of the Dallas (Tex.) Times-Herald and president of the American Society of Newspaper Editors.

The statement said the Government and the press committee would continue to review the subject of the press and national security and would meet again in several months.

In Dallas, Mr. McKnight said yesterday:

"At no time did President Kennedy propose censorship in his White House meeting with the editors and publishers.

"One brief reference was made concerning possibility of

an advisory center for information involving national security, but the President did not submit it as a firm proposal or offer a blueprint for its operation. . ."

Urges Public Statement

Lee Hills, executive editor of the Detroit Free Press and Miami Herald and a director of ASNE, also attended the meeting.

In Washington, Mr. Hills said:

"If President Kennedy wishes to propose a security information screening plan such as outlined by Mr. Salinger, I think he should do so publicly and tell how individual censorship by thousands of editors and broadcasters would be effective unless the Government also sets up strict censorship at the border for mail, cables, telephone calls and travelers . . ."

Further, Mr. Hills said, "the President made no direct proposal to the committee. He did make one casual reference to the possibility of some kind of advisory center on security matters but did not discuss it or refer to it again . . ."

Frank H. Bartholomew, president of United Press International, said in a statement:

"It was my feeling at the conclusion of the meeting that a program for channelizing Washington news concerning military and defense matters is by no means a dead issue in the President's mind. I did not feel the matter was a closed issue as the first meeting adjourned."

Discussion Recalled

D. Tennant Bryan, publisher of Richmond Newspapers, Inc., and one of the newspapermen present at the conference, issued the following statement last night:

"For more than an hour, we discussed fully with the President the responsibility of the daily newspaper press for the protection of national security. It was agreed that—in the absence of a declaration by the President of a state of national emergency—there was no necessity for the creation of a czar or monitor to guide editors in questions of security.

"It is hard for me to understand how Pierre Salinger, who was present throughout our meeting with the President and who participated in the drafting of the joint statement that followed the meeting, could say seriously that the President made such a proposal.

"Of course, we stand ready to renew our study of the problem whenever the President feels it necessary."

The May 9 meeting came as a follow-up to a speech Mr. Kennedy made to the American Newspaper Publishers Association April 27 in New York. He suggested the press consider self-censorship in a dealing with matters that might affect security.